

Buttermilk Poached Walleye

By Jim Pashby | Preparation time: 15 minutes | Cooking time: 10 minutes | Serves 4-6



INGREDIENTS

- 1 T. plus 4 T. butter
- 2 slices bacon, preferably thick-cut, diced
- 2 bunches (1½ lb.) mustard greens, kale, or collard greens, stems and center ribs discarded and leaves halved
- Salt and pepper
- Four 6-oz. fillets of walleye, sauger, yellow perch, freshwater drum, or similar fish
- 3 c. buttermilk
- 1 sprig fresh tarragon or 1.5 t. dried
- Juice of 1 lemon
- 1 T. fresh chives, finely chopped (optional)
- Crusty bread or mashed potatoes

DIRECTIONS

Melt 1 T. butter in a large sauté pan over medium-high heat. Add bacon and cook until almost crisp. Add greens and toss until they begin to wilt. Add about ¼ c. water and cook, covered, for 5 minutes, stirring occasionally. Remove lid and continue to cook until the greens are just tender and most of the liquid has evaporated. Season with salt and pepper, remove to a bowl, and keep warm until ready to serve.

Season the fillets and place them in a single layer in the sauté pan. Pour buttermilk over fillets, add tarragon, and place over medium heat. When the liquid begins to simmer, cover and cook for 2 minutes. Gently roll fillets over and cook for another minute, until the fish is firm but not falling apart.

With a slotted spatula, remove fillets to a plate; keep warm.

Discard tarragon sprig and transfer buttermilk, which will have separated, to a blender with the remaining 4 T. butter. Whiz until the butter is smoothly incorporated and the buttermilk is no longer separated. Add lemon juice, salt, and pepper to taste.

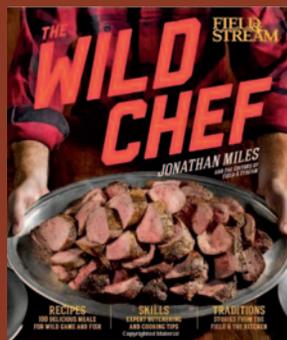
Place the greens in a shallow bowl and top with the fish. Pour some buttermilk on top. Sprinkle with chopped chives and serve. ■

If you're lucky or skilled enough to catch a few walleye (or sauger, perch, freshwater drum, northern pike, or other white-flesh fish), this is a wonderful way to prepare the fillets for family or guests. The recipe comes from Jonathan Miles's excellent *The Wild Chef* fish and game cookbook. My seven-year-old edition has two dozen bookmarked recipes stained with gravy, oil, and butter from years of use. Miles writes: "Poaching fish in buttermilk—a technique pioneered by New York superchef Jean-Georges Vongerichten—yields the familiar melt-away texture and pure flavor, but with a more sinful richness—and a poaching liquid you'll want to lap up with a spoon."

Miles prefers walleye for the dish but notes that any fish will be transformed with his method. I caught two nice drum last summer in the Marias River where it enters the Missouri near Loma and prepared the fillets this way. Yum.

Serve with crusty bread or mashed potatoes to sop up the scrumptious sauce. ■

—Jim Pashby is a writer in Helena.



More recipes from
Montana Outdoors